

BY PHILIP WAFULA

KAMPALA. About 140 locals in Moroto District have petitioned the President over an alleged misappropriation of a Shs22.5 billion compensation for land surface rights for the construction of Uganda's first clinker plant by Tororo Cement Ltd in the area.

The government last November released the funds to compensate about 8,000 landowners under the Naita-A-Tepeth Communal Land Association (CLA), a legal entity registered under the Ministry of Lands.

An initial Shs2 billion was secured for immediate disbursement, while the remainder is budgeted for in the next financial year.

However, allegations of forged accountabilities to create an impression that most landowners were paid have since emerged. It is reported that illiteracy, among other challenges, has made some of the said landowners unable to vacate for Tororo Cement Ltd to conduct its activities.

Illiteracy cited in Shs22b Moroto cement land compensation row

In an April 2 letter to President Museveni and the State House Anti-Corruption Unit (SHACU), the landowners said: "The illiterate members of the association, including the chairperson, Mr Elijah Lomiat, have been left helpless because the complaints are too much and they do not understand what the educated officers are doing with the money."

In the census report released by the Uganda Bureau of Statistics (Ubos) in October 2024, Karamoja (where Moroto falls), at 25.4 percent, has the lowest number of literate people, meaning that 74.6 percent of people in the region are illiterate.

The census report also showed that 74 percent of the 45.9 million Ugandans (33,966,000) are literate or can ably read and write any of the languages spoken in the country, while 26 percent

(11,934,000) are illiterate.

The landowners further allege that most of the funds were used to campaign against the ruling National Resistance Movement (NRM) party candidates during the 2026 General Election, while some of the officers used the funds to start personal construction projects and buy vehicles.

"By copy of this letter, we request your office to halt the pending payment of the funds to the officers until their arrest and audit is done," part of the letter read.

The SHACU spokesperson, Ms Mariam Natasha, on Tuesday, however, said she can only comment on the matter if the unit has received the petition.

The area Member of Parliament, Mr Albert Lokoru, said initial works were

delayed due to the overdue payment of surface rights.

"The company initially wanted to obtain land freely, but people insisted on their land rights by way of compensation," he said.

Last Thursday, five representatives of families from the villages of Nakomolwaret, Nakal, Nakwangakipi, Lokilech, Loyaraboth, Didid, Nakwanga in Katikekile Parish, Tapac Sub-county, petitioned the Moroto Resident District Commissioner (RDC), demanding a halt to the "unlawful evictions", while seeking the alleged unpaid compensation balance due to them.

"The project affected persons (PAPs) have not been fully compensated and are being forcefully evicted," the letter read in part.

The petitioners are seeking an audit into how much money was wired into the Naita-A-Tepeth CLA account vis-à-vis what was paid, and an immedi-

ate stop to the alleged forceful evictions and threats to evict, among other concessions.

Deputy RDC responds

The Moroto deputy RDC, Mr Justin Tuko, said he was in Tororo between April 12 and 17, and has to cross-check on the contents of that letter when he settles in the Moroto office. "But what I can say is that everybody was paid," he said.

Mr Tuko said when the wrangles came to President Museveni's attention, he intervened by convening a meeting between Naita-A-Tepeth CLA and Tororo Cement at State House, Entebbe in 2024.

Mr Tuko said during that meeting, some concessions were made, including leasing each acre of land at Shs10 million, and both parties reportedly left while 'happy'.

"The government paid on behalf of Tororo Cement, which will later repay the government," said Mr Tuko.

140
LOCALS
AFFECTED